

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

**Please cancel claims 2, 9, 16 and 18-20 without prejudice or disclaimer, and amend the claims as follows:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method for sintering a porous-glass material, having a core inside the porous-glass material, to form a glass base material, which is a base material for an optical fiber, comprising:

preparing a ring heater having an opening, through which said porous-glass material passes, for heating said porous-glass material;

selecting said porous-glass material having an outer diameter (d) within a predetermined range, E5 said predetermined range being determined based on an inner diameter (D) of said opening of said ring heater; and

heating said porous-glass material in an atmosphere of dehydration gas and inert gas with said ring heater,

wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter(d)of said porous-glass material comprises substantially  $0.5 \times D \leq d \leq 0.9 \times D$ .

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1 2, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is comprises substantially  $0.6 \times D \leq d \leq 0.8 \times D$ .

4. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is determined based on a vertical length (L) of said ring heater.

5. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is comprises substantially  $0.5 \times L \leq d \leq 0.9 \times L$ .

6. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is determined so that an eccentricity of a core inside said glass base material manufactured by sintering said porous -glass material becomes substantially 0.4 % or ~~below~~ less.

7. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said heating heats said porous-glass material in a furnace that is provided inside said opening of said ring heater so that a part of said furnace is surrounded by said ring heater.

8. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a preform, which is a base material of an optical fiber, comprising:

preparing a ring heater having an opening, through which a porous-glass material, having a core inside said porous-glass material, which is a base material of said preform, passes, for heating said porous-glass material;

forming said porous-glass material having an outer diameter (d) within a predetermined range, said predetermined range being determined based on an inner diameter (1)) of said opening of said ring heater;

sintering said porous-glass material in an atmosphere of dehydration gas and inert gas with said ring heater; and

elongating said sintered porous-glass material to form said preform,

wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially  $0.5xD \leq d \leq 0.9xD$ .

9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 8 9, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material ~~is~~ comprises substantially  $0.6xD \leq d \leq 0.8xD$ .

11. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is determined based on a vertical length (L) of said ring heater.

12. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is comprises substantially  $0.5xL \leq d \leq 0.9xL$ .

13. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is determined so that an eccentricity of a core inside said sintered porous-glass material becomes substantially 0.4 % or ~~below~~ less.

14. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said heating heats said porous-glass material in a furnace that is provided inside said opening of said ring heater so that a part of said furnace is surrounded by said ring heater.

15. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing an optical fiber, comprising:  
preparing a ring heater having an opening, through which a porous-glass material, having a core inside said porous-glass material, which is a base material of said optical fiber, passes, for heating said porous-glass material;

forming said porous -glass material having an outer diameter (d) within a predetermined range, said predetermined range being determined based on an inner diameter (D) of said opening of said ring heater;

sintering said porous-glass material in an atmosphere of dehydration gas and inert gas with said ring heater; and

elongating said sintered porous-glass material to form a preform; and

drawing said preform to form said optical fiber,

wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially  $0.5xD \leq d \leq 0.9xD$ .

16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 15 ~~16~~, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material ~~is~~ comprises substantially  $0.6xD \leq d \leq 0.8xD$

18-20. (Canceled)